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RR RUEHPD
DE RUEHLI #2162/01 2711612
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R 281612Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5204
INFO RUEHPD/AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA 0262
RUEANAT/NASA WASHDC
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC

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SIPDIS

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PASS TO OES (ANITA EISENSTADT) AND USDA TO FOREST SERVICE
(DALE DAGUE)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [TSPA](#) [PO](#)

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

REF: A. LISBON 1554

[1](#)B. LISBON 846

[1](#)C. LISBON 561

[1](#)D. LISBON 560

Summary

[1](#)1. At the September 21 Bilateral Commission Science and Technology (S&T) Subcommittee Meeting, Embassy officials reviewed the Embassy Science Fellow program, NASA/C3P activities, forest fire cooperation, and fuel conversion at the nuclear research reactor. The Portuguese delegation focused on the status of agreements with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Carnegie-Mellon University, and University of Texas/Austin. Both sides praised the strong S&T component of the successful September 10-15 trip to Florida headed by Ambassadors Hoffman and Catarino. End Summary.

Committee Members

[1](#)2. On September 21, Portugal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the S&T Subcommittee meeting in preparation for the October 3 Bilateral Commission. The US delegation was led by Pol/Econ Counselor and included EconChief, ESTH Officer, and National Institute of Health (NIH) Embassy Science Fellow. MFA North American Deputy Director Manuel Grainha do Vale headed the Portuguese delegation. Other participants included representatives from the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education (MCTES) and from the Luso-American Foundation (FLAD).

Embassy Science Fellows

[1](#)3. Pol/Econ Counselor opened the meeting by welcoming Kathleen Collins from the National Institutes of Health, the first Embassy Science Fellow in over a year. Collins, an expert in infectious diseases and Africa, arrived in Portugal on September 5 to explore possibilities of joint health projects in lusophone Africa. Her presence was well received by the Portuguese delegation which reiterated its desire for greater trilateral cooperation in Africa.

[1](#)4. Underscoring the importance of the Embassy Science Fellow Program to the bilateral S&T relationship, the Embassy reiterated its commitment to expand the program by announcing three additional fellows by summer 2007. Dr. Larry Suter from the National Science Foundation (NSF) arrives at the end of October 2006 to explore student participation in math and sciences and to increase linkages between schools and businesses. In February 2007, Dr. Ann Mari Thro, a Department of Agriculture expert in biotechnology will focus

on agricultural research and public outreach for biotech crops. In April 2007, Liz Williams from NASA will come to Portugal as part of the NASA Leadership Development Program.

NASA/C3P Activities

15. Both sides expressed satisfaction with NASA's ongoing efforts in Portugal. At the end of June, a team from NASA headquarters visited Portugal to assess current chrome-free coating system and printing press projects. They also continued discussions for a new joint project involving wind, solar, and hydrogen cell technology. The goal of this new project would be to create wind and solar power to support groundwater restoration and environmental clean-up at White Sands Test Facility in New Mexico.

Forest Fire Cooperation

16. The MFA North Americas Deputy Director expressed appreciation for the USDA Forest Service donation of 300 fire-resistant Nomex pants that arrived in July (reftel A). ESTH officer followed by highlighting a success story which resulted from the February/March visit by five USDA Forest Service experts on prescribed burns. In March, American and Portuguese Forest Services created a fire break which halted a forest fire in Serra do Marao in early June. The Portuguese Forest Service reported that the fire break stopped the fire from descending into a valley, preventing the 300 hectare fire from turning into a 3000 hectare conflagration.

Nuclear Reactor Fuel Conversion

17. The Portuguese delegation reported on a possible delay to the fuel conversion at Portugal's sole nuclear research

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reactor. Portugal has been coordinating with the US Departments of Energy and State and with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to convert the highly enriched uranium (HEU) to low enriched uranium (LEU) by January 2007 (reftels B,C,D). Snags in paperwork have caused a delay in the process. Portugal and the State Department are awaiting European Commission clearance to proceed with the conversion program.

Agreements with American Universities

18. MCTES representative briefed the S&T Subcommittee on the collaborative university agreements achieved as part of the Prime Minister's Technology Plan. On October 11, Prime Minister Socrates is scheduled to sign the Portugal-MIT agreement targeting collaborative efforts in engineering and management. The agreement calls for the MIT Engineering Systems Division to work with various Portuguese schools of engineering and national laboratories in four main areas: industrial production, energy, transport, and engineering. The MIT Sloan School of Management also plans to work with Portuguese schools of economy and management on the development of an international MBA program. The first activity for 2006 will be a series of doctoral seminars, entitled "Lisbon-Sloan Seminar Series in Management Science. Also in October, an agreement will be signed with Carnegie-Mellon University to focus on joint activities in communication and information technology. In November, Portugal will conclude a collaborative agreement with University of Texas/Austin that centers on advanced digital media and S&T commercialization.

Florida Trip

19. Both sides noted the success of the September 10-15 trip to Florida led by Ambassadors Hoffman and Catarino. Collaboration between government, educational institutions, and business to spur innovation and economic growth was a key S&T-related theme, with the delegation visiting the

University of Central Florida, the Miami-Dade Community College system, and Scripps Florida for a first-hand look. Both the FLAD and MCTES representatives stated their desire to replicate best practices here in Portugal. As follow-on to the Florida visit, FLAD plans to explore the possibility of working with the U.S. National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) to launch a program in Portugal similar to ones NFTE has in Belgium, Holland, and Ireland.

Comment

¶10. The S&T Subcommittee Meeting was collegial, focused, and yielded no surprises. The Portuguese side was deeply appreciative of Ambassador Hoffman and Embassy efforts in organizing the Florida trip. They noted that participants returned with a strong desire to follow)up with concrete action, with the aim of turning the goals of the Technology Plan into reality.
O'Neal